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SPECIAL ADJUSTMENT FACILITY FOR LATIN AMERICA AND THE CARIBBEAN: REPORT ON THE MID-TERM EVALUATION

SUMMARY

At its 1990 session, the Executive Board approved the extension of the Special Adjustment Facility for Latin America and the Caribbean (SAFLAC) until 1993 and additional funds in the amount of $6 million. The Executive Board noted that a mid-term evaluation would be undertaken in 1991, the results of which would be presented at the 1992 session (see E/ICEF/1990/P/L.41).

The evaluation was carried out by a group of international specialists seconded by UNICEF, with the aim of helping to determine the extent to which SAFLAC complied with the concept, criteria and objectives for which it was established in 1988. To date, projects have been approved for 17 countries. Of the total $16 million SAFLAC budget, funds in the amount of $9,984,500 have been allocated for these projects (see the table below).

The evaluation team made an in-depth analysis of seven selected projects in the three priority areas - advocacy, institution-building and accelerated service delivery - underlining achievements and limitations and suggesting remedial actions. In the areas of institution-building and advocacy, the evaluation considers the results to be positive. While the evaluation recognizes important results for projects in the area of accelerated service delivery, it states that the impact of these projects will depend on their potential for replication, mass application and reaching the poorest groups, a stage not yet reached. The evaluation also analysed the global relevance of SAFLAC in terms of mobilization of other partners, government involvement and SAFLAC operational aspects, and found that SAFLAC has made a valuable contribution.

According to the evaluation, important progress has been achieved in attracting additional financing. In Argentina and Mexico, projects have mobilized additional resources, showing a ratio of 36.5 to 1 and 13.8 to 1, respectively. In Argentina, Ecuador and Venezuela, SAFLAC advocacy was influential in obtaining international financial support for social programmes.

Upon analysing the findings of the evaluation, the secretariat concludes that SAFLAC has made a difference in the region, complementing the UNICEF regular programme of cooperation and promoting the goals of the World Summit for Children.

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INTRODUCTION

Brief overview of socio-economic conditions in the region

1. The 1980s in Latin America and the Caribbean began with the hope of turning economic growth into greater social justice. Unfortunately, the economic legacy of the decade could not have been worse. Payment and servicing of debt has impelled countries to adopt stringent financial policies and adjustment measures, resulting in very high social costs and tensions. The close of the decade witnessed an almost 10 per cent decline in per capita output and the continuation of long-standing inequalities worsened by the social cost of adjustment. Between 1981 and 1990, the region paid over $502 billion in external debt servicing. Yet, in spite of this enormous servicing payment, external debt remained at $428 billion in 1990. In the last 10 years, almost all of the countries in the region registered a decline in gross domestic product (GDP), which, on average, was 8.1 per cent less in 1991 than average GDP in 1981. This unfavourable situation, coupled with the large transfer of resources, consumer price increases that have reached hyperinflation levels, a rise in unemployment and a sharp decline in purchasing power of wages, generated an unparalleled process of regional impoverishment. According to 1990 estimates, 62 per cent of the region's population, 270 million people, were living in poverty.

2. Generally speaking, official development aid paradoxically came to a standstill during the 1980s, and there are indications that it may have declined in relative terms. In 1988, official development assistance represented only 6 per cent of the resources transferred by the region to meet external debt obligations. In other words, what the region disbursed to meet external debt servicing obligations was more than 17 times the amount it received in the form of official aid to development.

3. Naturally, the economic crisis has led to a decrease in social spending and an accelerated deterioration of social indicators. Despite progress in terms of child survival, one negative effect of the crisis has been the slowdown in the average annual decline of infant and child mortality. For example, while Barbados, Chile, Cuba and Uruguay managed to reduce their annual under-five mortality rates (U5MRs) by more than 5 per cent, 11 countries in the region failed to register a 3 per cent annual reduction. A 3.9 per cent average annual U5MR decline is required if the goals for the year 2000 are to be achieved. In addition, maternal mortality rates (MMRs) remain exceptionally high. In some countries, MMR exceeds that of the most developed countries by more than 100 times.

4. Childhood malnutrition is another effect of the economic crisis. For example, in Bolivia, Guatemala and Haiti, stunting and moderate malnutrition in children between two and five years of age exceed 50 per cent. Some 11 per cent of babies in 22 countries of the region are born with low birth weight. Major problems affecting education include increasingly high repetition and drop-out rates and poor quality. In 10 of the countries in the

region, less than one half of the children enrolled completed the primary education cycle.

5. In this context, the elements of the emerging regional consensus (macro-economic stability and consolidation, equity, competitiveness and political and social stability) imply a new type of relationship between the social sector and the economic process, namely, that the social sector cannot be neglected, not only for humanitarian reasons, but also because the economic process will be affected. This view was nurtured largely by the UNICEF-promoted "adjustment with a human face" concept, which has been well received in the region, and is an important gravitational point, given the harsh stabilization programmes put into place by the countries at the onset of the past decade.

The concept, criteria, priority and procedures for the use of SAFLAC

6. At its 1988 session, the Executive Board established a Special Adjustment Facility for Latin America and the Caribbean (SAFLAC), amounting to $10 million for the period 1988-1992, to help Governments cope with an economic crisis that has imposed severe hardships on the poor, particularly children and women.

7. In line with the overall objective of SAFLAC, the following criteria were established for access to the facility: (a) countries with low or no general resources allocation that are experiencing a demonstrable deterioration in their socio-economic situation; (b) countries that do not have or are unlikely to attract a significant amount of supplementary funding; (c) countries that have a possibility of initiating significant action with a small amount of funding; (d) the possibility of financing high-priority, multi-country actions using a small proportion of SAFLAC funding; and (e) the possibility of mobilizing additional resources for the delivery of basic services on a larger scale. It was also established that not all of the criteria need to be met in any single proposal submitted for financing.

Extension of SAFLAC and increase of funding

8. In view of the continuing deterioration of the socio-economic situation in the region, the Executive Board, appreciating the positive and valuable response of SAFLAC in helping countries face difficult socio-economic circumstances, approved a one-year extension of the facility until 1993. At the same time, an increase of funding of $6 million was approved, thus bringing the annual allocation for the period 1990-1993 from $2 million to $3 million (E/ICEF/1990/P/L.41).

9. The priorities of the facility were also refined, emphasizing the following: (a) promotion of balanced socio-economic development planning; (b) formulation of policies aimed at significantly increasing the priority of basic services development and resource flows to social development activities; (c) strengthening national capacity for enhancing administrative efficiency in the better use of resources for social development projects;

(d) support to initiatives aimed at easing the social consequences of the debt burden on vulnerable groups; and (e) improvement of systems of social indicators.

Procedures for approving project proposals

10. A committee was established to manage SAFLAC and maximize operational efficiency consisting of the regional director, the deputy regional director, the chief of the Americas Section, two UNICEF representatives selected on a rotating basis and the UNICEF regional adviser for planning and evaluation. The committee meets at least twice a year at the UNICEF Regional Office in Sante Fe de Bogota (Colombia) to review project proposals submitted by the country offices.

11. In the review, the proposals are checked against the priorities and criteria established for the allocation of funds. Those projects that meet the criteria for acceptance were endorsed and submitted to headquarters for approval of the Deputy Executive Director (Programmes). Those proposals that do not meet the criteria for acceptance are returned to the country offices with the committee's observations. The duration of a SAFLAC-funded project is a maximum of three years, and funds are in general committed for the life of the project. It was also established that, in the spirit of equity, the annual allocation for any single project should not exceed $300,000. Country offices are responsible for monitoring project implementation.

I. TRENDS IN SAFLAC DEVELOPMENT, 1988-1991

A. General characteristics of SAFLAC-funded projects

12. SAFLAC is used to finance projects in countries of varying levels of socio-economic development, all of which are struggling against the region's economic crisis and its tremendous deleterious effects on vulnerable groups, particularly children and women. Already impoverished, economic stress has further eroded the quality of life of these vulnerable groups. The 1980s have seen cutbacks in social services and, at the same time, an increasing demand for these services. SAFLAC-funded projects seek to address both sides of the problem. On the one hand, they support the formulation of more equitable social policies, and on the other hand, the development of low-cost, innovative social programmes.

13. SAFLAC funds projects in three basic categories: (a) advocacy, to sensitize and generate greater awareness and new ways of thinking and perception among Governments and the general public on the rights and needs of children; (b) institution-building, to strengthen national capacity in the formulation and/or reorientation of social policies, giving emphasis to the development of programmes to help alleviate the negative effects of economic adjustment and, in addition, activities aimed at enhancing local capacity to monitor social indicators relating to the well-being of children and women; and (c) service delivery, to develop low-cost project alternatives to meet the

basic social needs of children and women that can be expanded or replicated on a larger scale.

B. Overview of project execution

14. To date, funds have been approved for projects in 17 countries: Argentina, Brazil, Chile, Colombia, Costa Rica, Cuba, Ecuador, El Salvador, Guatemala, Guyana, Honduras, Jamaica, Mexico, Paraguay, Peru, Uruguay and Venezuela (see the table below). A regional project aimed at consolidating UNICEF cooperation with the Catholic Church in the areas of child survival and development (CSD) and the promotion of children's rights was approved in 1990. The project areas, duration and level of funding vary according to circumstances, priorities, objectives and activities contemplated. Thus, the projects are classified as follows: (a) advocacy (Argentina, Chile and Child Pastorate); (b) institution-building (Colombia, Costa Rica, Ecuador, El Salvador, Guatemala, Honduras, Jamaica, Paraguay, Peru, Venezuela and a recently approved project in Chile); and (c) acceleration of service delivery (Brazil, Cuba, Guyana, Mexico and Uruguay).

15. The first projects approved in 1988 were for Argentina, Brazil, Jamaica, Paraguay, Peru, Uruguay and Venezuela. In 1989, the facility funded projects in Cuba, Ecuador, Guyana and Mexico. In 1990 and 1991, projects were approved for Colombia, Costa Rica, El Salvador, Guatemala and Honduras, and SAFLAC funding was extended for Chile, Ecuador, Paraguay, Peru and Venezuela, but remained within the limits originally established by the guidelines and procedures for a single country.

16. The projects are at different stages of development. At the end of 1991, implementation of the first group of projects approved in 1988 and 1989 was either complete or near completion. Among those projects approved in 1990 and 1991, some are moving forward in their execution and others are about to initiate implementation. Since the initiation of the facility in 1988, its influence as a special adjustment instrument to ease the social costs of the economic crisis has been felt in the region.

17. A total amount of $9,984,500 1/ has been allocated for the above-mentioned projects for the period 1988-1993. Funds approved are distributed over the three basic project categories as follows: advocacy, $1,505,500 (15 per cent); institution-building, $5,177,000 (52 per cent); and accelerating service delivery, $3,302,000 (33 per cent). Project expenditures up to December 1991 totalled $6,603,100, 63 per cent of the allocated funds for the period (see the table below).

II. MID-TERM EVALUATION OF SAFLAC PERFORMANCE

A. Objective and methodology of the evaluation

18. At the 1990 regular session of the Executive Board, the Executive Director, in recommending the extension of SAFLAC and an increase in funding, also informed the Board that a comprehensive evaluation would be carried out in 1991 to assess the performance of the facility, the findings of which would be presented to the 1992 Executive Board (see E/ICEF/1990/P/L.20). The evaluation was undertaken by a group of outside consultants seconded by UNICEF staff members in the Evaluation Section at headquarters and the regional office. The general objective of the mid-term evaluation was to help determine whether SAFLAC has had any significant effect on the situation of children and on the promotion of social policies and programmes for the most vulnerable groups in the region.

19. In view of the diverse nature and characteristics of the SAFLAC-funded projects, with different objectives, strategies and coverage, the following methods were adopted for the evalutation. All SAFLAC-funded projects were analysed based on implementation information provided by the respective offices through responses to a questionnaire developed by the evaluators. The projects were analysed according to the following criteria and sampling framework: length of implementation; type of projects; amount of resources; level of development of the projects (including compliance with the set objectives); and regional distribution and representation. Seven case studies were then carefully selected, with the understanding that they established a representative sample of SAFLAC strategies and the types of projects being implemented. The projects in Argentina, Brazil, Ecuador, Jamaica, Mexico, Uruguay and Venezuela were selected for evaluation under the case study approach. All of the projects selected for the purpose of this evaluation had been under way for at least 18 months.

20. The case studies focused on a careful assessment of the seven projects in the three priority areas - advocacy, institution-building and service delivery. Prior documentation concerning the projects was thoroughly reviewed and rapid assessment procedures, such as focus groups and formal and informal interviews with individual beneficiaries, practitioners, government officials, staff of United Nations agencies, non-governmental organization (NGO) counterparts and UNICEF staff, were used. Various data gathering aids were devised, including interview guides as well as other quantitative tables for data analyses.

21. In order to facilitate a comparative analysis, the evaluation team further grouped the projects into two categories: macro-level, i.e., those projects covering advocacy and institution-building; and micro-level, those projects relating to service delivery. The decision was made to include at least three projects representing each category.

B. SAFLAC, an instrument to help mitigate the consequences of the economic crisis and adjustment measures: implementation experiences

22. This section reviews progress in project execution since the inception of the facility in 1988. Given the considerable number of projects, instead of reporting on experiences in each project, the present report will focus on the three priority areas mentioned above, with reference mainly to the seven case studies. The evaluation report is available for additional information.

Advocacy and social mobilization

23. The three projects approved in this area (Argentina, Chile and Child Pastorate) aim at raising awareness of children's problems and needs at creating a national movement involving political leaders and civil society for the cause of children. In short, these projects aim at making the principle of "children first" a reality. The evaluation notes that the projects have done much to generate a greater awareness among the general public of children's problems and the importance of meeting their needs.

Argentina

24. Regarding the case study in Argentina, the evaluation noted that although it was not possible to determine the exact impact of social communication activities, sufficient evidence existed to affirm that these activities had mobilized society around children's issues. In addition, studies undertaken on the situation of children and women provided important, updated statistical, analytical and conceptual information for policy makers. Within the context of the project in Argentina, technical support was provided for the formulation of a national maternal and child health (MCH) plan oriented towards reaching the goals of the year 2000. Financing for this plan in the amount of $200 million is being negotiated with the World Bank.

25. While highlighting the achievements of the project, the evaluators noted the following shortcomings: (a) the basic objective, to focus communication activities on poor children and at the same time generate public support for specific, mass interventions, has not yet been reached; (b) "adjustment with a human face" proposals that would help to reorient social policies and to develop alternative programmes to ease the cost of adjustment to children have yet to be designed; (c) while recognizing that the project has lent technical support to the Ministry of Health and Social Action, the evaluation states that not having a permanent link with government institutions has reduced the project's potential to foster the development of national programmes to respond to the needs of children that it has helped to bring to light.

26. Finally, the evaluation considered that the continued support to build consensus around the causes of children and their social significance was the most valuable contribution that UNICEF could make.

Institution-building and the formulation of social policies and related programmes

27. By the end of 1991, 11 projects had been approved in this area covering the development of social policies and their articulation with the economic sector; the design and preparation of national programmes of action; the development of policies related to youth; and the strengthening of institutional capacity to improve social indicator systems. These projects are being developed in Ecuador, Venezuela, Jamaica, Costa Rica, Guatemala, El Salvador, Honduras, Colombia, Chile, Peru and Paraguay. This report will highlight the experiences in the projects in Ecuador, Venezuela and Jamaica, which were assessed extensively in the evaluation.

Ecuador

28. The project in Ecuador focuses on macro-social policy development, providing support to the Consejo Nacional de Desarrollo (CONADE) (National Development Council) to strengthen its capacity in social development planning, as well as in the formulation, coordination and evaluation of social programmes. Support is also provided to strengthen the programming and management capacity of the Social Front (Ministries of Health, Education, Labour and CONADE) and for the preparation of social programmes for World Bank financing. SAFLAC supported a joint United Nations Development Programme (UNDP)/United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO)/CONADE/UNICEF publication on essential elements for a new strategy of integrated social development.

29. The evaluation notes some achievement in the areas of improvement of social information systems and training, especially in the management of social programmes. However, the evaluation observes that not enough use is made of the information gained through social information systems in the decision-making process. In the area of training, while recognizing the merit and importance of the training undertaken, the evaluation raises questions about the brevity of courses, asking whether it would not have been more helpful for SAFLAC to support the design and implementation of a four-year training programme based on identified priorities. Such support, according to the evaluation, would have heightened the impact by helping to generate a permanent commitment by the State to training of human resources.

30. The evaluation indicates that the project has been fundamental in incorporating more equitable and efficient social proposals on behalf of vulnerable groups into the development strategy. Thus far, good results have been achieved in several areas: strengthening of institutional capacity, design of an evaluation methodology and a strategy of integrated social development; and preparation of projects for external financing. When consolidated, these achievements will represent important advances that will transcend the period of the present Government, which has yet to implement some of the social policies developed as part of the project.

31. The evaluation also calls attention to the need to strengthen institutional capacity for global monitoring and evaluation of projects. It concludes with a statement that a common ground of understanding exists in the country regarding the characteristics and effects of adjustment policies and the needs and requirements of an integrated social development strategy.

Venezuela

32. In Venezuela, access to SAFLAC made it possible immediately to develop low-cost basic services interventions benefiting poor children and women. Most of the projects became integral components of the national plan (formulated with SAFLAC support) to combat poverty, and some have been brought to scale. In the second year of implementation, emphasis was placed on supporting the development of social policies to ease the cost of adjustment; training in management of social programmes; and the design of the national, family-based day-care project, which now benefits 140,000 children from birth to six years of age.

33. The situation analysis of children and women prepared with SAFLAC funding has enabled the Government that came into place in 1989 to formulate quickly an emergency social programme to help mitigate the effects of adjustment measures on the poor. Project interventions aimed at helping to balance social and economic aspects in the formulation of the seventh national development plan. In addition, the Venezuelan social investment fund was established with project support to finance social projects. Negotiations are under way with the Inter-American Development Bank (IDB) for a loan in the amount of $100 million. In the area of human resources development, the project advocated the creation of a school of social management. This is considered an important initiative given the existing limitations in this field, not only in Venezuela, but in the region as well.

34. The evaluation highlights the considerable success of the project, noting that with limited resources, the project contributed to the development of programmes that have acquired major importance and have become the central elements of the social policy of the Family Affairs Ministry. The evaluation also observes that although resources were limited, they were provided at a critical moment and have helped to generate a movement that has led to large-scale action.

35. The evaluation also notes that the SAFLAC project is not without constraints. A major deficiency is the absence of a system of social indicators in the Family Affairs Ministry, the Planning Department and other social institutions. Nevertheless, it states that recently, action was taken to establish in a unit in the Family Affairs Ministry for the setting up of a system to monitor and evaluate national social programmes. Furthermore, the evaluation observes that the Venezuelan social investment fund has not yet been able to finance projects to improve the quality of life of the vulnerable groups.

36. In the opinion of the evaluators, the projects in Ecuador and Venezuela represent the best examples of SAFLAC support at the macro-level for the formulation of national social policies.

Jamaica

37. The project in Jamaica is oriented exclusively towards the establishment of a low-cost system to measure changes in the standard of living of the vulnerable groups. The project seeks to identify a group of indicators that can rapidly reflect MCH status and the well-being of children. The evaluation notes that the greatest merit of the system, established at the Planning Institute of Jamaica, is its high level of institutionalization. SAFLAC support has been fundamental to the functioning of this system. Furthermore, the system contributes to the generation of extremely useful data for the purpose of monitoring the social situation of vulnerable groups.

38. The evaluation identifies a series of limitations that need to be overcome for the system to be fully operational and produce information that can be used in decision-making. These problems relate to data production, analysis and dissemination, data consistency and feedback of information to the ministries concerned. Furthermore, certain sensitive indicators, such as infant mortality, are not being monitored. Nevertheless, the evaluation observes that, should the project be successful in removing the difficulties it faces, it will become both a complement to the traditional sphere of UNICEF action and a useful mechanism, in terms of situation analysis, for UNICEF work in Jamaica.

Accelerating service delivery through the development of basic services social projects as models

39. SAFLAC is financing five, small-scale basic services projects, one each in Brazil, Cuba, Guyana, Mexico and Uruguay, as a testing ground for their universalization. With the exception of the project in Brazil, the projects are multisectoral in nature. An intensive assessment was made of the projects in Brazil, Mexico and Uruguay. The following analysis will focus on these projects.

Brazil

40. The project in Brazil is being implemented in three north-eastern states and seeks to improve the economic situation of poor women in the informal sector. Based on a proven methodology, credit is provided to small micro-enterprises, along with training on financial matters. UNICEF entered into a collaborative arrangement with three NGOs for the execution of the project, leading also to complementarity of inputs. The difficult economic situation in 1990, coupled with hyperinflation and the related adjustment measures adopted, has somewhat hampered the pace of project implementation. Nevertheless, at the end of 1990, loans were granted to 745 micro-enterprises and 230 solidarity group cooperatives, and training was provided for 1,100 persons. Approximately 3,000 persons benefit from the project. Once the

initial difficulties were overcome, the project began a dynamic expansion, and by July 1991, the quantitative achievements were almost double those reached in 1990 in terms of beneficiaries and credits granted.

41. An external evaluation undertaken in December 1990 by UNICEF and NGO counterparts favourably appraised the progress achieved, noting the considerable benefits received by the micro-entrepreneurs. The SAFLAC evaluation mission considers that an effective methodology was developed at a minimum cost. Now that the validity of the methodology has been demonstrated and experience has proved its effectiveness, the challenge consists of rapidly expanding coverage, for which the involvement of the Government is indispensable. Without this support, the project will loose its scope and will not achieve the expected impact.

42. The evaluation also observes that good progress is being made in consolidating the gender perspective with the financial support of the Ford Foundation. Initially, the project was targeted at poor women. However, issues such as family income have led the agencies supporting the project to include male-run micro-enterprises as well. In addition, the evaluation, while recognizing that the project beneficiaries are poor, self-employed persons working under minimal conditions, notes that the project does not always reach the poorest; fortunately, the project planners and implementers are fully aware of these shortcomings.

Mexico

43. Initially, the project in Mexico sought to alleviate the nutritional deficiencies of poor communities affected by the drastic adjustment measures through the establishment of popular kitchens and a nutrition surveillance system and support to income-generating activities for women. This objective was later broadened to include other basic service activities such as preventive health care, child development, recreation and occupational training, leading the evaluation team to note that the enhanced concept situated the project within the framework of the government social development strategy.

44. As of August 1991, 520 popular kitchens were operating, 200 in Mexico City and 320 in 23 states, benefiting approximately 23,000 families. Some 400,000 project beneficiaries are pregnant and nursing women and schoolchildren, who receive a regular breakfast. In addition, 1,600 adults have learned to read and write; 4,000 people have received job training; and a variety of cultural events were conducted, with the participation of 43,000 people.

45. According to an evaluation undertaken by the Government and UNICEF, one of the merits of this programme could be the demonstration of the importance of active community participation in the development of alternative strategies for social development. However, the SAFLAC evaluation identifies a series of limitations which, in most cases, confirmed the findings of the UNICEF/government assessment, namely: the lack of monitoring indicators and

information on cost and impact; the decline in community participation; the weak involvement of some government agencies previously committed to the programme; and the high cost of the basic module of the kitchen. While the evaluation observes that the project reaches the poor, it states that the poorest section of the population has yet to benefit. The evaluation also notes that this limitation does not weaken the project's validity, and observes that project activities initially financed by SAFLAC resources have been absorbed by the Government, thus satisfying one of the SAFLAC criteria and ensuring project sustainability.

Uruguay

46. As a response to the severe hardships imposed on vulnerable groups by the economic crisis and consequent adjustment measures, in 1980, the Government of Uruguay, with SAFLAC support, began to implement a national plan for an integrated focus on children, women and families living in poverty conditions in the areas of health, nutrition, education and family promotion. The benefit of actual experience in helping to reorient social policies and programmes, and spending in the social sector was among the considerations in the decision to support the plan.

47. To date, 43 centres are operational, mainly providing health and nutrition care for 2,500 children from birth to six years of age. This coverage represents only 25 per cent of the programme target population. The evaluations previously conducted by the Government and UNICEF noted the positive effect of the centres in improving the nutritional status of children. However, the other aspects of the programme are either weak or non-existent. A series of factors, including the election and change of Government, programme and institutional restructuring and lack of community participation, have delayed programme development, especially during 1990.

48. In an effort to overcome the difficulties encountered, the new Government has introduced some changes in the conception and scope of the programme, bringing it in line with its own social policy. The programme is now an integral part of the emergency social investment fund. The new proposal emphasizes the creation of micro-enterprise production units, higher priority to attention to families and comprehensive care to children under two years of age. The coverage target has also been reduced to better focus on the poorest families and on children at greatest risk in order to increase the quality of services.

49. The evaluation mission states that while the national plan is without a doubt an innovative proposal for social investment, its effectiveness in terms of coverage, convergence of services for integrated attention to children and intersectoral coordination has been limited. The evaluation also observes that the transition between the two Governments has hindered the consolidation process.

50. In summary, the evaluation notes that while previous evaluations have called attention to critical areas in programme execution, no corrective

actions seem to have been taken. Furthermore, the evaluation indicates that it would have been useful if an intensive analysis of progress in programme implementation (achievements and constraints) were made prior to approving funds for the following year's plan of action. It should be noted that this view is not completely shared by the SAFLAC committee, which reviews the results of previous year's execution of all projects before approving additional funds.

C. SAFLAC-funded projects: achievements and limitations

51. Two criteria were focused on to evaluate achievements and limitations: (a) macro-strategies (advocacy, institution-building), which require a relatively lengthy implementation period to have an impact on the situation of children and women; and (b) micro-strategies (service delivery), the results of which can be more immediate or short-term. At this stage of implementation of the projects, there are great variations in results.

52. The evaluation notes that results of projects in the macro category are positive. It indicates that projects in the area of advocacy have done much to generate awareness of children's problems. The project in Argentina is a case in point, as are activities promoted in Chile to mobilize political leaders for the cause of children, and in the region, to enlist the mobilization capacity of the Catholic Church to promote CSD and children's rights. Since the ultimate test of advocacy and social mobilization is improvement of the well-being of children, the evaluation notes that the actions taken will fall short if they do not generate government- and state-level awareness and commitments to the development of programmes to benefit poor children.

53. The evaluation of projects which support the formulation of more equitable social policies reveals, among other results, that the "adjustment with a human face" objective is incorporated into national development plans. The evaluation also notes that this effort has prompted greater acceptance of the UNICEF-promoted strategy among other cooperating agencies and financial institutions such as the World Bank. While highlighting the SAFLAC contribution to these achievements, the evaluation indicates that much remains to be done to ensure the impact and sustainability of the projects, noting that policies, strategies and plans will need to become operational, as they have in Ecuador, for example. This will require the development of concrete activities; the availability of financial, technical and human resources; and long-term commitments. According to the evaluators, this stage is only beginning.

54. The projects which include as a component the design and establishment of a social indicators system to monitor the situation of children and women are at the initial stage, with the exception of the projects in Jamaica and Guyana. The evaluation notes that the project in Jamaica is beginning to generate important information, which has yet to be used in the decision-making process.

55. As previously discussed, projects aimed at accelerating service delivery have produced a variety of important results. However, the evaluation notes that the overall impact of the projects depends on their potential for going-to-scale, for which it is essential that they be institutionalized in government-priority social investment programmes. In the opinion of the evaluators, in most cases, this stage has not been reached, and prospects are varied. In Brazil, initial contacts made with the Ministry of Social Action have revealed interest on the part of government officials, who see the project as the seed for a social development policy. In Mexico, the Government has assumed increasing responsibility in the project; however, the possibility of mass coverage depends upon the development of an expansion model less costly and perhaps more loosely administered and more flexible. In Uruguay, despite the existence of a valid concept and a good design, the programme has just begun to achieve its initial coverage goals. In Venezuela, the project component for pre-schoolers was influential in the design and testing of a strategy of government attention for pre-school children that has ultimately led to mass coverage.

56. An important achievement of SAFLAC projects is their ability to mobilize additional resources. In addition to direct resource mobilization, some projects, such as those in Argentina and Ecuador, have been influential in attracting large-scale financing from multilateral financial institutions through support for the design of social programmes. The evaluation identifies the need for consolidation of actions undertaken as a major limitation, while also recognizing the relatively short histories of the projects.

Lessons learned

57. The evaluators identified some lessons learned in the process of implementation of the projects, which they suggest should be considered in future proposals. There should be a balance between the formulation and application phases of social policies, since the former tends to take an excessive amount of time, which restricts the execution stage and reduces impact. Also, in order to broaden the scope of activities, more advocacy is needed to ensure that projects are treated by Governments as their own initiatives. Accordingly, advocacy projects and the project in Brazil must look decisively in the direction of forging the broadest possible alliance between Government, social and religious groups and NGOs.

58. Among the most significant lessons learned, the evaluation underlines the facility's potential to mobilize support for important actions benefiting vulnerable groups with relatively low resources. This is particularly true when (a) projects are supported by high technical cooperation capacity; (b) initiatives supported have a multiplying effect; and (c) emphasis is placed on the convergence of the actions of Governments, social organizations and institutional cooperation agencies in the formulation of policies and integrated basic services projects. Another lesson learned through the experiences of the project in Brazil is that the success of income-generation

projects is directly related to the prior experience of beneficiaries and the skill and ability of micro-entrepreneurs, as well as to access to a market.

D. Relevance of the projects to SAFLAC criteria and priorities

59. After reviewing the proposals for funding presented over the last three years, the evaluation underlines the steady improvement in their quality. Also, the evaluation states that there has been an increase in project compliance with SAFLAC criteria and priorities. There was evidence, however, of cases where projects (such as the project in Guyana) meet SAFLAC criteria, but may not have adequately addressed national priority problems. Nevertheless, the evaluation recognizes the efforts of the committee in insisting on (a) the submission of well-prepared proposals; (b) the need for projects to be more explicit about their relationship with the regular programme of cooperation; and (c) the conformity of the projects to SAFLAC objectives and priorities. Still, the evaluators request the committee to be more rigorous in selecting projects in terms of project feasibility and of locally available human resources.

E. Linkage between SAFLAC-funded projects and the UNICEF country programme

60. The analysis of the projects and other UNICEF documentation has led the evaluation team to observe that SAFLAC is clearly complementary to the UNICEF country programmes of cooperation, since the projects funded attempt to test and validate new approaches in a regional context, which reinforces the country programmes. SAFLAC operates through the structure of regular UNICEF programmes of cooperation without generating new administrative structures and management procedures. Furthermore, the evaluation notes that the three priority areas of SAFLAC projects are the fields of action supported by the country programmes. Thus, there is no discrepancy between the SAFLAC scope of action and regular UNICEF programming.

61. The evaluation, while recognizing the innovative strategy of the UNICEF regular programme of cooperation, highlights the unique character of SAFLAC-funded projects in supporting the design and implementation of new social development alternatives which help to enhance national capacities to respond to the social demands generated by the economic crisis, while at the same time, increase the stock of knowledge and skills in UNICEF. The projects in Brazil, Cuba, Mexico, Uruguay, Venezuela and Ecuador are examples.

62. In the opinion of the evaluation team, given the present and foreseeable circumstances of the region, the social development challenge includes developing more efficient interventions to respond on a large scale to the basic needs of the population. In this context, actions in areas of research, the design of national social policies and experimentation in new initiatives are very important, but in general, receive less support from donor countries. SAFLAC is an ideal mechanism to fulfil this responsibility.

F. Multiplying effects of SAFLAC-funded projects: mobilization of resources

63. An objective of the facility is to mobilize additional resources in order to take to scale projects that have proven their effectiveness. The evaluation team, examining both types of SAFLAC-funded proposals, macro and micro, notes that in general, the projects have stimulated major additional financial support. An analysis of project expenditures up to June 1991 has shown that an amount of $4,548,200 2/ was disbursed. Direct contributions from other sources - Governments, NGOs, the private sector and multilateral and bilateral cooperation - amounts to $36,241,500, a ratio of 7.97 to 1. The projects in Argentina and Mexico have mobilized the largest amounts of additional resources. The project in Argentina has generated $23,140,600 from the private sector in uncharged expenses for social communication activities, a ratio of 36.5 to 1, and in Mexico, the Government allocated $8.3 million for the project, a ratio of 13.8 to 1. It should be noted that the project in Uruguay has received a substantial allocation of funds from the Government in the ratio of 6.2 to 1, and Ecuador has also shown its potential to mobilize resources in the ratio of 3.1 to 1. Excluding the projects in Argentina and Mexico, the average ratio is 1.44 to 1.

64. The evaluation also observes that some SAFLAC projects have been influential in mobilizing large-scale financing, as already mentioned in the cases of the MCH plan in Argentina and the formulation of social programmes in Ecuador and Venezuela to be funded by multilateral financial institutions. In addition, in Venezuela, the availability of SAFLAC resources at a critical moment fostered a movement that generated massive government actions and funding for the anti-poverty programme.

65. It is the view of the evaluators that, in line with SAFLAC criteria, projects funded should explicitly include a resource mobilization goal. In addition, special attention should be given to contributions from Governments and other cooperating agencies during implementation of these projects.

G. Mobilization of government action

66. Assessing government involvement in the projects, the evaluation team observes a high and increasing level of participation by the majority of host Governments. In the case of projects that support the formulation of social development policies, the evaluation highlights the significant results achieved in Venezuela and Ecuador in securing a high level of commitment from the Governments. In Venezuela, SAFLAC has helped to formulate policies and plans and to initiate projects that have become central elements of the social policy of the Family Affairs Ministry. In Ecuador, SAFLAC support has been crucial to the formulation of social programmes whose impact will benefit the most vulnerable segments of the population. The evaluation, however, states that the limited capacity of the Government to implement these programmes somehow reduces the impact of SAFLAC cooperation.

67. With regard to advocacy and the acceleration of service delivery projects, the evaluation indicates that their viability in the future depends to a great extent on the degree of government participation (as in Mexico, for example). In other projects, such as the project in Argentina, the evaluation, while recognizing the achievements, notes the lack of sufficient involvement of the Government in project implementation as a shortcoming. Likewise, in order to take the project in Brazil to scale, greater government participation must be secured. In general, the evaluation notes that Governments have found SAFLAC to be very relevant and the projects funded to be an important source of support for exploring alternative approaches and mechanisms to alleviate the social consequences of the economic crisis and adjustment.

H. Mobilization of other partners: NGOs and the community

68. Some projects have established important links with NGOs. For example, in Argentina, close alliances were forged with the National Paediatric Association, which observes that its involvement in the project has changed its raison d'etre and has given new meaning to its actions. In Brazil, the project is being executed by specialized NGOs. The Catholic Church is an important ally for accelerating CSD actions; in essence, this is the objective of the Child Pastorate regional project. The proposals in Argentina, Brazil, Paraguay and Venezuela also feature valuable cooperation with the Church.

69. The evaluation notes, however, that in many cases, cooperation with NGOs is minimal for various reasons, either because no NGOs are working in the field of project activities (Uruguay), or NGOs in the communities are weak and far removed from government action (Mexico). In other cases, the involvement of NGOs is less necessary because of the characteristics of the projects, such as projects in the area of social policy development.

70. The evaluation observes that the projects focusing on social policy formulation and creation of awareness fail to consider community participation in their objectives, with the exception of some components of the projects in Venezuela and Ecuador and actions undertaken through the Child Pastorate project, which are based exclusively on community participation and a high degree of local involvement. With regard to the service delivery projects, the evaluation notes that the project in Brazil should foster a more participatory form of management by the beneficiaries in the NGO actions and should encourage their organization. The project in Uruguay has made an attempt to foster community organization to manage social programmes, but progress has been limited. In Mexico, community organization initially generated by the project is declining.

I. Cooperation with other agencies

71. Another important dimension of SAFLAC projects concerns the mobilization of other technical and financial cooperation agencies to achieve

complementarity of inputs, coordination, mass application and concentration of resources in priority areas. According to the evaluation, the projects most associated with other cooperation agencies are those in Brazil, Ecuador and Honduras. The Brazil project has received support from IDB and the Ford Foundation. In Ecuador, close alliances have been established with UNESCO, UNDP, the International Labour Organisation and the Pan American Health Organization in the development of several activities. The Honduras project receives technical and financial support from UNDP, the United Nations Population Fund, the World Bank and the United States Agency for International Development. Linkages with the World Bank have also been established through support provided by the projects in the design of social development programmes, such as those in Argentina and Ecuador. The project in El Salvador has also established close links with the World Bank and IDB. In the process of supporting the preparation of national plans of action to achieve the goals set for the 1990s in some countries in Central America, cooperative work was established with various agencies of the United Nations system, in particular, UNDP. Notwithstanding these advances in inter-agency cooperation, the evaluation team considers it extremely important for SAFLAC projects further to strengthen coordination with other international agencies in order to maximize the benefits and efficiency of technical cooperation in the countries.

J. Management of SAFLAC-funded projects: monitoring and evaluation

72. As already mentioned, the UNICEF office responsible for implementation of a SAFLAC project is also responsible for its monitoring and evaluation. However, according to the evaluation, almost all of the projects lack indicators against which to measure progress and established monitoring mechanisms. The project in Brazil, which has developed a set of operational and impact indicators, is an exception.

73. The evaluation mission highlights the importance of evaluations for the projects since their innovative nature implies eventual adjustments. However, the evaluators observe that evaluation mechanisms and procedures are precarious and haphazard. The evaluation also recommends that projects which require the analysis of cost-effectiveness incorporate this factor in a systematic way. Nevertheless, the evaluators recognize the efforts being made to improve the evaluation process, noting that many offices have undertaken evaluations, some with external specialists, such as the offices in Argentina, Brazil, Jamaica, Mexico and Uruguay. The evaluation also notes that the social policy formulation projects are the weakest in terms of monitoring and evaluation. However, as noted above, in the case of the project in Venezuela, a government entity to monitor and evaluate programmes in the social sector was recently created.

Relations among projects: exchange of experiences

74. SAFLAC projects have a variety of objectives, but often contemplate similar activities, such as the development of evaluation methodologies to assess the impact of social programmes, integrated focus on pre-school children and the formulation of social policies with an integrated approach. Initially, no mechanism was established for the systematic dissemination of results and exchange of information between projects. The evaluation team believes that this type of horizontal cooperation should be encouraged, especially given the level of development of SAFLAC.

SAFLAC committee

75. The evaluation mission, reviewing the role played by the committee in the management of SAFLAC, notes that it should be credited with having managed to keep the facility flexible, adapting itself to specific conditions of the countries, and also for not becoming bureaucratic. The evaluation team also found the committee to be an open forum with a high-level capacity for analysis and self-criticism. However, the evaluators make some suggestions which they believe may help the committee to firmly establish its identity and operating mechanisms: (a) guidelines should be prepared to ensure a greater conceptual homogeneity of project documents and uniformity in terms of criteria and operating mechanisms; (b) a mechanism should be established to allow rapid communication between the members of the committee and those directly involved with the projects, and it is recommended that the committee meet at least every four months instead of twice a year; (c) an officer should be designated to work with the technical team on a full-time basis in order to optimize the committee's work; (d) an annual report should be prepared to document SAFLAC experiences; and (e) a monitoring system should be established to complement project accounting control. The secretariat appreciates the above suggestions and is confident that they will help to enhance the committee's performance, but the merit of some of these suggestions will need to be further analysed.

III. CONCLUSION

A. Comments and recommendations of the evaluators

76. The review of all SAFLAC-funded proposals and the intensive assessment of the seven projects selected have led to a series of comments and recommendations on the part of the evaluators, which are extensively presented in the evaluation report. The present document summarizes the major comments and recommendations below (it should be noted that some suggestions already incorporated into other sections of this report are not repeated here):

(a) In general terms, the projects have produced worthy results and have helped to foster the development of policies with a broader social dimension. They have also contributed to the creation of a supportive environment for the discussion and consideration of children's issues and the testing of alternative actions for direct attention to the vulnerable groups of society. Yet, SAFLAC's impact is still insufficient because of at least three circumstances, which vary in importance from one country to another: (i) the lack of consensus and widespread support to transform SAFLAC proposals and government policies into state strategies and long-term commitments; (ii) the instability of national officials in charge of project implementation and limitations of national counterpart institutions; and (iii) electoral conjuncture and change in Government;

(b) The capacity to persuade Governments to formulate and implement innovative programmes of massive application or the ability to mobilize civil society and the international cooperation community depends on the recognition of UNICEF-supported projects as viable and technically sound. In this respect SAFLAC has played an important role;

(c) The innovative role of SAFLAC-funded projects should be used as a model for: (i) the application of new and more efficient intervention technologies with greater social returns, focusing on society's vulnerable groups; (ii) the design of effective methodologies and guidelines for project execution; (iii) the development of creative social communication activities that focus on children's needs and rights; and (iv) more efficient and effective project management;

(d) In view of the weakness of public institutions in implementing social policies, SAFLAC should foster the development of initiatives to improve the efficiency of the social sector. This would mean that support would be provided for projects aimed at administrative and policy reform to heighten the impact of planning formulation in the social sector;

(e) In the area of human resources development, training programmes should be institutionalized. Governments should be convinced to take this action. The limited resources of SAFLAC should not be spent on short-term training courses, but should give priority to the design and development of a permanent training programme to be carried out by governmental or other institutions;

(f) In view of the inadequacy of social statistics and information in the countries of the region and also its importance for programme planning and preparation, this area should be reinforced as a basic component of projects;

(g) Projects with a macro-strategy, such as those in Argentina, Venezuela and Ecuador, have been useful in adding to UNICEF credibility and reputation. This represents a solid basis for a greater acceptance of UNICEF-promoted ideas and proposals. Furthermore, despite the many difficulties associated with efforts to formulate and implement national policies, these clearly can have the greatest impact. It is, therefore, recommended that priority be given to the development of projects in this category. In this way, SAFLAC would help to create an important UNICEF presence in the design of social policy;

(h) Service delivery projects approved in the future should be those which clearly focus on the development of more effective and efficient intervention models. Delivery of traditional services or the use of proven methodologies should be part of the UNICEF regular programme of cooperation;

(i) As already indicated, many service delivery projects encounter difficulties in reaching the poorest sector of the population. The methodological challenge is enormous since this group does not usually have any form of organization. Despite the obstacles, a greater effort should be made to select projects that include a clear strategy to reach the poorest members of society;

(j) Methodology and actions to allow and encourage active and permanent community participation in social processes and initiatives should be reinforced. The impact of SAFLAC-funded projects cannot be consolidated and sustained unless this objective is met;

(k) SAFLAC methodological products clearly represent a social asset to countries of the region and to UNICEF. Accordingly, it would be beneficial if the committee were to encourage meetings and dialogue within the region to discuss and disseminate the methodologies developed;

(l) The evaluation outlines four critical areas that require further SAFLAC support as a requirement for greater impact and effectiveness: (i) effective operative mechanisms designed to translate policies into viable and sustainable action plans; (ii) institutional strengthening in the design and management of social programmes; (iii) the design and organization of a training programme in management and evaluation of social projects; and (iv) the establishment of an adequate system of social indicators to facilitate the decision-making process.

77. The evaluation concludes by stating that this exercise is not a completed process. Accordingly, it offers analysis, ideas and recommendations to help SAFLAC fully realize its potential. The difficulties and problems identified should serve to expand specific lines of action and introduce certain changes.

B. SAFLAC: does it make a difference? Considerations of the secretariat

78. As they face a deteriorating socio-economic situation, the countries of the region must target and efficiently use available resources. This means turning the rhetoric of consensus to equity into large-scale and effective social programmes on behalf of vulnerable groups within the context of macro-policies designed to promote human development.

79. SAFLAC, as underscored by the evaluation, has made a valuable contribution to the region by prompting Governments and communities to support the development of strategies for a more just society, policies for efficient social investments, as well as initiatives targeted at the poor that can be taken to scale. SAFLAC has come to represent a combination of "seed money" and innovative proposals, demonstrating its potential to stamp national socio-economic policies with the seal of "children first".

80. Furthermore, as stated in the evaluation, the innovative and creative responses to new opportunities and the catalytic characteristics of the projects, combined with their capacity to generate greater awareness of children's problems and their potential to mobilize resources in amounts far superior to the facility's allocations, are all elements that uphold the view that SAFLAC is an important adjustment instrument. The report also underscores the fact that SAFLAC has helped to enhance UNICEF technical respectability in the region, an extremely important factor in the 1990s, as UNICEF expands its cooperation to the design, formulation and monitoring of national programmes of action.

81. In short, after three years of implementation, despite the limitations and difficulties encountered by some projects, it can be said that SAFLAC, with its limited resources, has made a difference that complements the UNICEF regular programme of cooperation in the countries.

82. The Declaration and Plan of Action of the World Summit for Children calls for a series of key actions on the part of Governments and international development agencies to support national programmes for the achievement of the goals set for the year 2000. Among other actions, Governments should prepare national programmes of action; re-examine, in the context of national plans and policies, how higher priority can be given to programmes benefiting children; and establish an appropriate monitoring system of social indicators. As already noted, SAFLAC plays a strategic role in supporting the development of balanced socio-economic policies and programmes to reach the unreached, the improvement of systems of social indicators and the promotion of the principle of "first call for children".

83. The plan of action also includes the formulation of debt relief schemes as a way to support programmes for children. UNICEF is playing an important role in developing innovative approaches and mechanisms for debt relief for children. SAFLAC can provide technical support to countries interested in developing such schemes with creditor institutions.

84. In the next few years, SAFLAC will continue to play an important role, serving as a complementary instrument to support the conceptualization and development of national programmes of action to monitor progress towards and achieve the goals of the 1990s. Within this context, SAFLAC can facilitate and support horizontal technical cooperation for the exchange of successful experiences, methodologies and social technologies for the achievement of the goals. As such, the secretariat sees SAFLAC as providing important support for follow-up on the World Summit for Children and for the achievement of the goals of the 1990s. In general, the secretariat endorses most of the comments, suggestions and recommendations made by the evaluators; the secretariat believes that they will certainly help to enhance the effectiveness of SAFLAC in supporting the concerned countries in their efforts to cope with the social costs of the economic crisis and adjustment. The secretariat takes this opportunity to express its thanks to the evaluation team and also those staff members who provided support.

SAFLAC ALLOCATIONS BY COUNTRY OUT OF A TOTAL OF $16 MILLION

(In United States dollars)

ALLOCATIONS	1988	1989	1990	1991	1992	1993	TOTAL
Argentina	125 000	300 000	125 000	300 000			850 000
Brazil	150 000	300 000	300 000	150 000			900 000
Chile			55 500	300 000			355 500
Cuba		225 000	175 000				400 000
Colombia				300 000	300 000		600 000
Costa Rica				115 000	120 000		235 000
Ecuador		150 000	153 000	300 000	122 000		725 000
El Salvador				230 000			230 000
Guatemala				300 000	300 000		600 000
Guyana		300 000					300 000
Honduras			85 000	170 000			255 000
Jamaica	50 000	100 000					150 000
Mexico		300 000	300 000	300 000			900 000
Paraguay	80 000	27 000			90 000		197 000
Peru	63 333	126 667		295 000	227 000	178 000	890 000
Uruguay	145 000	145 000	257 000	255 000			802 000
Venezuela	147 500	297 500		200 000	250 000		895 000
Subregional			90 000	300 000	210 000		600 000
Subregional				100 000			100 000
Total allocated	760 833	2 271 167	1 540 500	3 615 000a/	1 619 000	178 000	9 984 500

a/ Includes funds allocated during previous years.

Notes

1/ These amounts differ from those included in the evaluation report, which reflects allocations and expenditures up to June 1991 amounting to $7,902,500 and $4,548,300, respectively. It should be noted that of the total funds allocated, some $2 million is for the period 1992-1993.

2/ This amount differs from the amount included in paragraph 17 of the present report, which represents expenditures up to December 1991, but is used to calculate the ratio vis-à-vis other contributions received as of June 1991.